

200hh- Gateway To Nibbana

(summarised transcription)

Often I speak about the endurance of unpleasant or pleasant feeling. So how would you practically do that? Or rather how would failing to endure the arisen unpleasant feeling, manifest for you? If something bothers you and you fail to endure it, how do you know that you failed to endure it? What qualifies as failure in enduring it?

It is when you are doing something on account of it or when you are acting out of it. Acting out of anger or lust that you fail to endure. Even though the action that you did was not sufficient enough to constitute a breach in your precepts, nevertheless, you know for yourself that YOU CHOSE to act out of lust, aversion or distraction. That's how you know you failed to endure the pressure of an arisen feeling.

Now what do you do in order to endure the pressure? You don't act out of it. The reason why I am saying this is because you might think that to endure the pressure you must be mindful of it, however that is wrong because mindfulness will arise from your choice not to act out of that pressure. It will arise depending on whether you act out of craving or not. But if you think "I must be mindful of this" you will be DOING the mindfulness, i.e. still acting out of craving.

That's why virtue and precepts come first. By not acting out of discomfort which resulted from an insult etc, you know that you are enduring it. However you might be enduring not acting out physically, but now you must not act out verbally and when you become skilled in that you will be able to endure mentally not feeding any unwholesome thoughts. Which means that at any point throughout that proper way of enduring, you are mindful, by forcing yourself to not act out of craving. By prioritising the 'not acting out' you are by default cultivating mindfulness.

It's your mind that is choosing to act out of lust that makes you overwhelmed with lust. It's not by having the lust arise on its own. Its mind choosing to accept or engage with ill will that overwhelms you. The arisen ill will which arises on its own is not the problem. That choosing is the gateway through which these things have to arise. You invite them in, you open the door by 'acting out'. You don't have to worry about being mindful every second. No, you just need to be mindful peripherally, by not losing the sight of what you are about to do. For example, if someone comes to your doorstep and tries to pressure you to let them in. You are the one who chooses to let them in or keep the door closed. Sometimes many people arrive at the door and you cannot bear that pressure, so you open the door to try and chase them away, but by doing that you open the door and that's all they wanted you to do. They don't care if you open the door to let them in or chase them away, they just want you to open the door because when it's open they will find a way in. So often people think: "I must get rid of this thing", so they open the door and engage with the lust or ill will and thus become fully involved with it.

Not opening the door is the endurance that I am speaking about. If there is unpleasant pressure, don't try to get rid of it. If there is pressure towards pleasure, don't welcome it. Just remain unengaged with it, keep the door closed, guard the gateway. You don't need to be policing what is arising for you or what is pressuring you, or what hindrance is currently present. All you need to do is stay at the gateway because that's where these things will become a problem, and knowing where the problem is the necessary basis for any wisdom to arise.

The problem is not in something which upset me or in something I have seen which made my mind lustful. No, the problem is when those things arise, you have no idea where the gateway or the problem is and you are automatically acting out of it. You cannot NOT act because you do not know where the gateway is, because you just keep acting out of it.

The gateway which I am describing is the middle way, which you need to see as an option. Even if you still choose to act out or not, at least now you will see that the choice is on you.

By abstaining from opening the door for welcoming pleasure or by abstaining from opening the door for trying to get rid of pain, you are then choosing the middle way.

By choosing to not act out, you are choosing the middle way and then you will start to see it. That is why if you guard your mind correctly, you go above the five hindrances or anything that bothers you. You will realise that none of those arisen things are a problem in themselves. The problem is you being affected by them or involved with them from the gateway where you chose to open the door.

Enduring the five hindrances correctly, your mind will rise above them. It's not about preventing them from arising because it's not in themselves that they hinder you. They become hindrances because of your choice which you are responsible for. Hindrances cease to be a hindrance but as phenomena they do not necessarily disappear altogether.

So how then do you practically not act out of these hindrances or these unpleasant things? What do you do right now? You don't lose sight of the gateway. By clarifying your responsibility of seeing the gateway you will not need to worry about what specific lust or annoyance will arise in the future, all you need to do is not lose the sight of this gateway here and now, because all these things can only enter through the gateway. By supporting the recognition of the gateway (and thus by developing the gatekeeper), you won't be supporting the cause of your problems, which is ignoring the gateway.

The gateway is your intentional choice to engage. Thus the entire Dhamma can be boiled down to the simple instruction from the Buddha: "Whatever you know is wholesome, cultivate it and whatever you know is unwholesome, do not cultivate it". Do it or not, it's a matter of your choice, and if you cultivate the right choices sufficiently enough you will get to understand and uproot the nature of lust, aversion and delusion, you will fully discern the gateway and be unable to lose sight of it.